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UNDERSTANDING RISK

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALAN WALTER

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

UNDERSTANDING RISK

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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UNDERSTANDING RISK

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Patton, in a letter to his son concerning the 1944 battles for France, wrote, "I have used one principle in these operations and that is to fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run. That is the whole art of war, and when you get to be general, remember it."¹ Risk taking is the leadership skill that separated Patton from other senior wartime leaders. Patton unquestionably developed a tolerance for risk that made him an effective combat leader. General Eisenhower stated "Patton was preeminently a combat commander. Many people fail to realize that the first thing that usually slows up operations is an element of caution, fatigue, or doubt on the part of a higher commander. Patton was never affected by these and consequently, his troops were not affected. Several of his subordinate commanders turned in magnificent performances in the late show, but if they had had an example of pessimism, caution, and delay above them, they could not possibly have acted as they did."² Patton's risk taking abilities were not based solely on his personality, but developed as a result of an exhaustive study of warfare. He sought to understand risk and make it work for him.³

The purpose of this paper is not to examine Patton's risk taking skills, but rather, like Patton, to examine the general

topic of risk. Risk is an important concept to understand. An army, such as ours, that expects to fight outnumbered and win is driven to view risk as a combat multiplier. Accordingly, it must develop a doctrine that promotes an understanding of risk and an environment that rewards successful risk takers. Some may believe that risk taking is a function of personality. Indeed some personality traits appear to be correlated to risk takers.⁴ However, in the main, risk taking is a developed skill, a skill that can be shaped and sharpened by study, by participation in war games, by a firm grasp of the basics of the profession, and lastly by a firm understanding of one's self.⁵

This paper will analyze risk as a military phenomenon, focus in on Operation Market Garden and the Inchon Landing as case studies of risk, and finally develop some general conclusions about risk taking.

ENDNOTES

1. Russell F. Weigley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants, p. 243.
2. Martin Blumenson, Patton Papers, p. 339.
3. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-103, p. 33. (Hereafter called "FM 22-103")
4. Paul Torrance and Robert Ziller, Risk and Life Experience: Development of a Scale for Measuring Risk-Taking Tendencies, p. iii.
5. "FM 22-103", p. 26.

CHAPTER II

RISK AS A MILITARY PHENOMENON

Many decisions in military organizations differ from those in civilian organizations not only because of the content of military decisions (e.g., combat and death) but also because of the particular context of the social and institutional factors that are unique to the military as an organization. Military officers face a wide variety of decisions under risk.¹ In short, military officers think differently about risk, because what is placed at risk is the lives and physical welfare of others balanced against the requirement to achieve a military objective. Whereas in the civilian world, especially in business, what is placed at risk is assets which are balanced against the well-being of the organization. As a result, although somewhat similar, risk and risk taking are much more dynamic concepts in the military. For as Clausewitz states, "War is a special activity, different and separate from any other pursued by man."²

WHAT IS RISK?

Military publications are filled with discussions concerning risk. However, they never get around to defining risk. Webster's defines risk as someone or something that creates or suggests a hazard or adverse chance; a dangerous element or factor, often used with qualifiers to indicate the degree or kind of

hazard.³ This is a somewhat narrow view, but it is worth analyzing from the military perspective.

War by its very nature is a hazard. What the enemy is doing or about to do to place a friendly force in danger should not be considered risk. Risk in the military sense has a proactive rather than reactive meaning. The action the commander elects to take in order to deal with an enemy situation is in the nature of risk. This requires a commander to first identify actions which are risky.

Identifying any action as risky is a difficult task to get right, due to the dynamics of war. First, one must deal with uncertainty, for as Clausewitz states, "War is the realm of uncertainty: three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty. A sensitive and discriminating judgment is called for; a skilled intelligence to scent out the truth."⁴ Two points need to be made concerning risk. First, the action the commander elects to take must be based on a sensitive and discriminating judgment to determine if it is outside the collective thought of the institution. (e.g., does the action violate a principal of war or doctrine). If the action is indeed outside the collective thought will it meet with success? In other words, risk taking involves knowing when to and when not to break the principles or go against the spirit of doctrine. A commander who does things only "by the book" may become predictable to the enemy on the battle-

field and easy to counter. Secondly, commanders must take risk under conditions of uncertainty, not only uncertainty concerning the quality of the decision, but also uncertainty about the enemy situation. These two notions about doctrine and uncertainty require a closer analysis.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOCTRINE AND RISK

The idea that the U.S. Army must develop leaders who are able to take risk on the battlefield permeates our literature.⁵ In order to meet this goal, it would be helpful to determine what is and what is not a risk. In this endeavor, we must be careful about how success is defined to avoid risk taking only for the sake of risk taking. Success is not risk taking; success is winning. General Eisenhower gave an excellent description of success when he stated, "In war about the only criterion that can be applied to a commander is his accumulated record of victory and defeat. If regularly successful he gets credit for his skill, his judgment as to the possible and impossible and his leadership."⁶

The U.S. Army has two tiers of doctrine. The first is fundamental doctrine which "is a condensed expression of an army's approach to fighting campaigns, major operations, battles, and engagements."⁷ This is how an army thinks about warfare and is found in FM 100-5. The second tier is basically everything the army officially publishes. This generally tells the Army what to

do in various situations and is based upon an accumulation of knowledge and experience. In essence, most actions are already thought out from the operational down to the tactical level of war. Officers are expected to read and become expert with the goal of developing minds which are capable of "sensitive and discriminating judgments" as to what is "possible" and "impossible." One must be cautious because in many respects doctrine inhibits creativity. On the other hand, doctrine does serve as a term of reference when contemplating actions.

Deviations from doctrine based on enlightened judgment (e.g. the officer understands what is written) should always be encouraged and tolerated in peacetime regardless of the outcome of the action. Allowing officers to make and learn from mistakes is the only way to create an environment that develops officers capable of risk taking on the battlefield. General Marshall developed such an environment when he was the Commandant of the Infantry School. One of Marshall's first orders was that "any student solution of a problem that ran counter to the approved school solution and yet showed independent creative thinking would be published to the class."⁸ This type of risk-taking environment has not always existed in the U.S. Army, especially the period after the Vietnam war.⁹ Today the U.S. Army acknowledges the type of environment required for risk taking and is quickly moving in that direction.¹⁰

Deviation from doctrine in peace or war based upon ignorance

or a lack of understanding should be discouraged even if the resulting action is a success. Luck has a way of catching up with tactical incompetence and ignorance.

Commanders who do things "by the book" are not normally considered risk takers. That is not to say that commanders who do things "by the book" are inferior intellectually or otherwise to commanders who are risk takers. Keep in mind that the bottom line is a commander's "record of wins and losses" and that there are many different and equally correct ways to win. Senior commanders need both types, as Generals Bradley's view of Generals Harmon and Eddy illustrates:

The profane and hot-tempered Harmon brought to corps the rare combination of sound tactical judgment and boldness that together make a great commander. More than any other division commander in North Africa, he was constantly and brilliantly aggressive; in Europe he was to become our most outstanding tank commander. Yet like all tankers, Ernie's heart rode with the Shermans and as a result he sometimes failed to make good use of his infantrymen. But of all these commanders, none was better balanced nor more cooperative than Manton Eddy. Tactically he performed with classical maneuvers such as the one he employed at Jefna. Yet though not timid, neither was he bold; Manton liked to count his steps carefully before he took them.¹¹

The basic question of what role doctrine should play in thinking about risk taking is important to answer. Important from a practical sense since our goal is to develop risk takers in our Army.¹² Risk taking is not doing things "by the book." Adopting a definition of risk that includes actions which depart from doctrine would be helpful in analyzing operations from a risk standpoint and developing competent risk takers.

RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

The idea that some decisions must be made under conditions of uncertainty and that boldness is required to make such decisions is not new to the American Army. Discussions concerning risk and uncertainty have been found in most issues of FM 100-5. The edition used during World War II generally discusses risk as it applies to decisions made as a result of the estimate process. The 1941 edition states,

The estimate often requires rapid thinking, with consideration limited to essential factors. In campaign, exact conclusions concerning the enemy can seldom be drawn. To delay action in an emergency because of insufficient information shows a lack of energetic leadership, and may result in lost opportunities. The commander must take calculated risks.¹³

This has been a general theme of risk taking in the U.S. Army. The inference is that if one can eliminate uncertainty, one can make better decisions and reduce risk. This was generally viewed as a command and control problem which could be solved. As a result, billions of dollars have been spent on command, control, and intelligence.

Martin Van Creveld's analysis of our current efforts to solve the problem is enlightening. "Certainty itself is best understood as the product of two factors, information and time. Generally, though not invariably, the more modern a military force and the conflict in which it is engaged, the greater the amount of information that is needed for the command process to

take place and the shorter the time in which to gather, analyze, and transmit that information. The history of command can thus be described in terms of a race between the demand for information and the ability of the command systems to meet it. The race is eternal." Creveld concludes that, "the inability of present day command systems, for all their sophistication, to consistently produce more certainty than did their predecessors is the outcome of several factors." One crucial element in any command system -- the men who comprise it -- has in many important ways changed hardly at all since prehistoric times, the tools by which information enters the mind (and is often distorted in the process) remaining the same."¹⁴

Creveld points out that uncertainty in warfare is here to stay. It is a condition of war. FM 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Level, states, "Risk taking means making needed decisions in varying degrees of uncertainty."¹⁵ It does take a certain amount of boldness to make a decision with incomplete information, but this is not all there is to risk taking. Uncertainty does play a role, but it can be overcome by boldness. Risk taking, therefore, involves proactive actions made under conditions of uncertainty which fall outside the collective thoughts of the institution. This is a higher level leadership skill than the skill currently identified in Army publications. It comes closer to Clausewitz's requirement for a "sensitive and discriminating judgment." What is obviously called for in making

these types of decisions is a sense of boldness.

RISK AND BOLDNESS

Any study of risk requires an examination of the concept of boldness. Risk and boldness go hand in hand. Boldness is the vehicle that allows a commander to take risks or to carry a risky decision to a favorable conclusion. Boldness by definition means not shrinking from risk.¹⁶ Clausewitz states, "A soldier, whether drummer boy or general, can possess no nobler quality; it is the very metal that gives edge and luster to the sword."¹⁷ But this quality must be restrained; it must have limits to be effective.

A purposeful sense of boldness is what is required at the senior level.¹⁸ Clausewitz states,

The higher up the chain of command, the greater is the need for boldness to be supported by a reflective mind, so the boldness does not degenerate in purposeless bursts of blind passion. Command becomes progressively less a matter of personal sacrifice and increasingly concern for the safety of others and for the common purpose. The quality that in most soldiers is disciplined by service regulations that have become second nature to them, must in the commanding officer be disciplined by reflection.¹⁹

There must be some intellectual framework for determining whether a bold act is appropriate. It must be controlled in some manner. Clausewitz states that,

Happy the army where ill-timed boldness occurs frequently; it is a luxuriant weed, but indicates the richness of the soil. Even foolhardiness -- that is, boldness without any object -- is not to be despised: basically it stems from daring, which in this case has

erupted with a passion unrestrained by thought. Only when boldness rebels against obedience, when it defiantly ignores an expressed command, must it be treated as a dangerous offense; then it must be prevented, not for its innate qualities, but because an order has been disobeyed, and in war obedience is of cardinal importance.²⁰

The point Clausewitz makes in the modern sense is that boldness as well as risk taking must stay within the bounds of the senior commander's intent to be useful. This is a fine line because the intent of the operation, or for that matter the war, must be clearly articulated and understood. FM 22-103 supports this concept when it states that risks are based on the fundamental undertaking of the commander's intent. As the 1944 edition of FM 100-5 stated:

Every individual from the highest commander to the lowest private must always remember that inaction and neglect of opportunities will warrant more severe censure than an error of judgment in the action taken. The criterion by which a commander judges the soundness of his own decision is whether it will further the intentions of the higher commander.²¹

RISK VIEWED AS A POTENTIAL LOSS OR GAIN

Risk taking involves proactive actions made under conditions of uncertainty which fall outside the collective thoughts of the institution. This definition still falls short of the mark because it does not indicate a gain. In order for risk to be viewed as worthwhile there must be some potential pay off to the command as a result of the action. On the other hand, there also exists a potential loss to the command. Herein lies the real

essence of risk taking and why judgment is so critical in determining what is and what is not possible. In this respect, the idea of potential loss or gain must be added to the way we think about risk.

EFFECT OF OUR MILITARY HERITAGE ON RISK

The way the U.S. Army thought about risk in the past was a direct reflection of the way the Army intended to fight. Until recently the American Army thought in terms of mass and concentration. An army strong enough to choose the strategy of annihilation should always choose it, because the most certain and probably the most rapid route to victory lay through the destruction of the enemy's armed force. To destroy the enemy army, the only proven way remained the application of mass and concentration in the manner of U. S. Grant.²² After all, with our vast resources we could afford to fight in such a manner. These ideas were not adjusted to reflect the peacetime strength of the Army, because our geography bought us time to develop a large army. Officers brought up under these conditions would naturally think about risk as something to be avoided. As a result in the past risk taking was de-emphasized.

The situation today is much different. The U.S. Army does not have time, geography, or troops on its side. We are a large forward deployed force, fighting a numerically superior and qualitatively equal enemy without the option of declining battle. As

such our Army must approach risk taking as a combat multiplier. Risk must be defined as a bold proactive action, a potential loss or gain, and train our minds accordingly. Many times, only by taking reasonable risks can senior leaders or commanders hope to succeed.²³

ENDNOTES

1. Douglas C. Hayden, et al., "Risk Preference in Military Decision Making: An Empirical Study," Journal of Political and Military Sociology, Fall 1987, p. 245.
2. Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, p. 187.
3. "Risk," Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, 1981, p. 1961.
4. Clausewitz, p.101.
5. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-103, p. 33 (hereafter referred to as "FM 22-103").
6. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 178.
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14. Martin Van Creveld, Command, pp. 257-258.

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16. "Bold," Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, 1981, p. 248.
17. Clausewitz, p. 190.
18. "FM 22-103," p. 33.
19. Clausewitz, p. 191.
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22. Russell F. Weigley, The American Way of War, p. 313.
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CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF RISK

Risk is generally of two types. One type a leader has control over, but it is a function of many variables such as education, judgment, command and control, and the opponent's skill, to name a few. Charles Leader calls this type nonsystematic risk. Another type operating on the battlefield may be called systematic risk. Systematic risk can not be eliminated from any understanding. Call it fate, or chance, or luck, systematic risk is always present and is independent of good planning or good execution.¹ Clausewitz has a different perspective: "In short, absolute, so called mathematical, factors never find a firm basis in military calculations. From the very start there is an interplay of possibilities, probabilities, good luck and bad that weaves its way throughout the length and breadth of the tapestry. In the whole range of human activities, war most closely resembles a game of cards."² Weather is an example of systematic risk in war. The original kamikaze typhoon, the Divine Wind, that destroyed the Mongol invasion fleet headed for Japan in 1281 is a classical example of systematic risk.³ There is not much a senior leader can do about systematic risk. He should not use it as a way to explain away failure in cases where operational success was based on luck or chance rather than reasoned judgment or hard work.

RISK TAKING AND AGE

It is a common belief in the military that senior officers avoid risk and are less bold than junior officers. Leader's analysis of this belief represents the mainstream of thought (especially by junior officers) on this subject:

The typical second lieutenant is a risk acceptor, particularly those in combat arms. These young men are filled with the spirit of the legends of the Corps. A careerist orientation has yet to compartmentalize physical and moral courage in their minds. The young officer will accept career risks with the same vigor he accepts physical risks. Feelings for risk begin to change dramatically when it is necessary to compete for augmentation, desirable assignments, and promotion. The discovery that careerist conformity is a greater guarantee of advancement than brilliant individualism reinforces risk-avoiding behavior.⁴

Captain Leader's assertion that risk aversion increases with age appears to be supported by scientific studies. An interesting statistical analysis of 326 land battles described in The Encyclopedia of Military History, A Dictionary of Battles was conducted by Dean K. Simonton of the University of California (1980). As reported in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Simonton concluded that older generals tend to be more cautious or conservative than their younger opponents in that the younger commander is more likely to take the offensive in battle, whereas, the older general is more likely to be on the defensive. This finding is consistent with Vroom and Pahl's 1971 finding reporting that risk taking is inversely related to age.⁵ Vroom and Pahl also found a significant negative relationship

between age and the value placed on risk.⁶

Clausewitz, as well as many other theorists, support Captain Leader's view. Clausewitz states,

The power of the various emotions is sharply reduced by the intervention of lucid thought and more, by self control. Consequently, boldness grows less common in the higher ranks. Even if the growth of an officer's perception and intelligence does not keep pace with his rise in rank, the realities of war will impose their conditions and concerns on him. Indeed their influence on him will be greater the less he really understands them. Nearly every general known to us from history as mediocre, even vacillating, was noted for dash and determination as a junior officer.⁷

Physical fitness may play a large role in this area. Wavell expressed the following when discussing the importance of physical fitness:

It is impossible really to give exact values to the fire and boldness of youth as against the judgment and experience of riper years; if the mature mind still has the capacity to conceive and absorb new ideas, to withstand unexpected shocks, and to put into execution bold and unorthodox designs, its superior knowledge, and judgment will give the advantage over youth. At the same time there is no doubt that a good young general will usually beat a good old one.⁸

The common thread in both analyses is age and the character of the mind. From a practical sense, little can be gleaned about the age issue. However, the mature mind's ability to retain the capacity to conceive and absorb new ideas is worthy of further study.

IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE ON RISK TAKING

Captain Leader argues that the creative mind in senior commanders is diminished because of "careerist conformity." This assertion may be true in some cases.⁹ However, the loss of creativity or boldness may be just as much a function of how senior commanders approach decision making as anything else. Klein found out that experienced decision makers rarely thought about two or more options and tried to figure out which was better. They are not searching for the best option. They only want to find one that works. This phenomenon he terms recognitional decision making.¹⁰

Recognitional decision making is typical of people with years of experience. Basically, proficient decision makers are able to use their experience to recognize a situation as familiar, which gives them a sense of what goals are feasible, what cues are important, what to expect next, and what actions are typical in that situation. The ability to recognize the typical action means that experienced decision makers do not have to do any concurrent deliberation about options. They do not, however, just blindly carry out the actions. They first consider whether there are any potential problems and only if everything seems reasonable do they go ahead. If pitfalls are imagined, then the decision maker will try to modify the action. If that does not work, the officer jettisons it and thinks about the next most typical action.¹¹ Although this is a expedient method of deci-

sion making it certainly can not be called creative. It also inhibits risk taking because it is looking for a course of action which will work, rather than a course of action which will pay the biggest dividend in terms of potential loss or gain, in effect settling for less when much more is possible.

The biggest problem with recognitional decision making is that the experience may not be relevant. In an era where weapons, tactics, and doctrine are changing at an accelerating rate, experience may, in fact, be a detriment to effective performance because the lessons taught by experience may lose their relevance or may even be incorrect after ten to twenty years or more. Certainly, many of the lessons of World War II, or even Korea, did not prove to be terribly relevant in Vietnam.¹² From the senior commander's perspective adopting a course of action outside his experience level would be viewed as a risk. This is a phenomenon that senior commanders must be aware of and overcome if they are to take risk.

COLLECTIVE RISK TAKING

Research has indicated that group decisions are more risky than individual decisions. Since many decisions involving military and international policy are made by groups, some authors have warned us of the potentially dangerous effect in areas where increased risk might work against our best efforts.¹³ The problem is war is so complex that some commanders lack the intellec-

tual capacity to function effectively. The usual way to counteract this is to relegate important decisions to groups.¹⁴ Irving L. Janis in the book Victims of Groupthink, points out that, "frequently mindless conformity and collective misjudgment of serious risk," results from group decisions.¹⁵ He states that four major American military disasters (Viet Nam, Pearl Harbor, Korea, and the Bay of Pigs) resulted from decisions made by groups composed of competent, experienced and intelligent men. The main reason is in some groups individuals are afraid to express their honest views. The key point is for senior leaders to understand that decisions made by committee tend to be risky solely because of the psychological processes inherent in group decision making.

RISK ANALYSIS

The Army recognizes two types of risk on the battlefield. One is the risk of losing men and equipment to attain the mission. The other is that a chosen course of action may not be successful, or, even if successful, fail to achieve the desired effect.¹⁶

The risk to men and equipment to achieve the mission can ultimately be assessed only by what the friendly force places at risk and by the damage expected to be inflicted on the enemy.¹⁷ Risking the destruction of a company in order to destroy a battalion has meaning. Stating that the company has a 20 or 30 per

cent chance of success is nonsense. The incompatibility between risk and calculated odds gives value to the judgment of those who can weigh opportunities and select from among many risky choices one that provides greatest success.¹⁸ Regardless of numerical strength an advantage may be gained if a commander has developed this skill. This type of risk analysis is done concurrently with a different type of analysis.

At the operational level commanders are, to a greater extent, more concerned with analyzing risk in terms of whether or not a chosen course action may not be successful, or, even if successful, fail to achieve the desired effect. The environment in which these decisions are made is much more uncertain and difficult to manage. The Market Garden operation and the Inchon landing are examples of this phenomenon and are discussed in some detail in following chapters.

THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF RISK

Commanders who always avoid risk taking are, in theory, taking risk. Those who do not understand this paradox not only make themselves predictable on the battlefield but make the opposing commander's life much more pleasant. They soon lose the initiative and either are outright defeated or win battles by paying too high a price in lives and material. The manner in which Montgomery commanded during World War II is a good example of this paradox. From the German perspective, Montgomery was an

easy commander to deal with solely because of his methodical nature and risk avoidance. One could argue that, with the exception of Market Garden, Montgomery never lost a battle. However, the net effect of his actions cost the Allies time which translates in modern war to excess casualties.

The same holds true for commanders who always take significant risks. They too become predictable, albeit what is predictable is their unpredictability. A clever opposing commander will soon pick up the pattern and use it to his advantage or the commander's luck or judgment will fail; in either case, great potential damage to the command is possible. MacArthur during the Korean war is an example of the effects of a commander who always took excessive risk.

Forced to make a choice between these two paradoxes, the latter is better than the former. What is called for is a balanced commander, one who knows when and when not to take risk. Since this character trait is hard to predict, clever senior commanders develop a stable of horses and try to match the man with the situation. Eisenhower's use of Patton to command Third Army is a classical wartime example. The Army must also fill the stables in peacetime to prepare for war. General Marshall's relationship with the reckless, resourceful, aggressive and unorthodox Terry Allen reflects this notion.¹⁹ Marshall, observing Allen when the latter was a student at the Infantry School, stated, "(Allen) had a dubious future in peacetime but should be

entrusted with a division in time of war."²⁰ The Army allowed Allen to stick around and when war broke out, Marshall (then Army Chief of Staff) selected him to command the 1st Infantry Division. That division was one of the first to see combat in World War II. Allen twice proved to be an outstanding division commander during the War. The challenge for the Army is to keep soldiers around who are a bit of a pain in peacetime, only for the purpose of using them in war. Unfortunately, in peacetime it is difficult for some senior commanders to recognize this requirement.

Another paradox is that the greater the risk, the greater the chance that the enemy will view the action as improbable or even impossible. The net effect of this paradox is that risk is actually reduced. The key to making this paradox work for a commander is that the enemy must believe that the action is impossible or militarily illogical. MacArthur's selection of the Inchon landing site, as we shall see in a later chapter, fell within the impossible category. Eisenhower's selection of the Normandy beaches, supported by a good deception plan, fell within the illogical category.

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CHAPTER IV

OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

Market Garden, in retrospect, was a high-risk venture, which, if it had paid off, might have shortened World War II by several months.¹ The plan was to drop three airborne divisions (the last strategic reserves) as steppingstones behind the German lines along a narrow 60-mile causeway over marshy ground, seizing the bridges of three rivers -- the Maas (Meuse), the Waal (Rhine), and the Lek (lower Rhine). The British Second Army, led by XXX Corps, would drive across the "airborne carpet" and turn the northern flank of the Siegfried Line.² The operation was a failure for several reasons: the tactical plan and employment of XXX Corps; the failure to capture the German 15th Army at Antwerp, which was free to defend the approaches to Arnhem; poor communications and use of intelligence; the weather in England which hampered airborne operations;³ and, finally, German reaction, which was prompt, skillful, and efficient.⁴

At the end of the operation the German defense was intact and the Rhine remained a barrier to the Allies.⁵ The combined airborne and ground force losses in killed, wounded, and missing amounted to more than 17,000.⁶ Market Garden is an example of a high risk operation at both the tactical and the operational level. It is a classic study of how things go wrong in war because of poor risk analysis.

BACKGROUND

Eisenhower's major operational concern in September of 1944 was logistics. Both Operation Cobra, the breakout from the Normandy beaches in July, and the pursuit of German forces across France in August, had been so successful that in September, attacks were running out of steam. Logistics could not keep pace with operations. At the time both Montgomery's and Bradley's Army Groups were drawing the great bulk of their supplies over the Normandy beaches.⁷

Antwerp was the key to solving the logistical problem. It was Europe's biggest port, and the one closest to the German heartland.⁸ At the end of August, Eisenhower, realizing that Antwerp was a major operational objective, favored Montgomery's thrust.⁹ He gave Montgomery priority of supplies. On the 4th of September, Antwerp was captured with its port facilities intact. Since the Germans still controlled the river Scheldt, which was the approach to Antwerp, the port was useless. This could have been prevented had Montgomery seen the need to immediately push forward to secure the approaches. This proved to be a missed opportunity which cost the allies dearly in terms of time and casualties. It was not until 28 November that the port was used by allied ships.¹⁰

In August both Montgomery and Bradley believed that the German forces were in such poor condition that a single thrust into Germany would end the war. It was only a question of who

Eisenhower was going to pick to administer the coup de grâce. Eisenhower was not as optimistic. "Every commander from division upwards," Eisenhower later wrote, was "obsessed with the idea that with only a few more tons of supply, he could rush right on and win the war."¹¹ Eisenhower's pessimism proved correct albeit for the wrong reasons. The Wehrmacht had almost recovered its balance; at all events, it was no longer "on the run." The Germans were again holding a coherent line -- admittedly thin and taut and with meager reserves behind it -- but a line nevertheless.¹²

Montgomery's proposal as outlined to Eisenhower on 10 September was to make a single thrust through Arnhem to Berlin.¹³ As Eisenhower recalls in his memoirs,

I explained to Montgomery the condition of our supply system and our need for early use of Antwerp. I pointed out that, without railroad bridges over the Rhine and ample stockages of supplies on hand there was no possibility of maintaining a force in Germany capable of penetrating to its capital. There was still a considerable reserve in the middle of the enemy country and I knew that any pencillike thrust into the heart of Germany such as he proposed would meet nothing but certain destruction. This was true, no matter on what part of the front it might be attempted. I would not consider it.¹⁴

What Eisenhower did agree to at the meeting was Operation Market Garden, a scaled-down version of Montgomery's original plan.

THE INTENT OF THE OPERATION

Montgomery and Eisenhower both take credit (some might say discredit) for the concept. Eisenhower clearly states his intent

of the operation in his memoirs. "I instructed him (Montgomery) that what I did want in the north was Antwerp working, and I also wanted a line covering that port. Beyond this I believed it possible that we might with airborne assistance seize a bridgehead over the Rhine in the Arnhem region, flanking the defenses of the Siegfried Line. The operation ... would be merely an incident and extension of our eastward rush to the line we needed for temporary security." -- In short, a tactical operation in support of an operational objective. As such he authorized Montgomery to defer the clearing out of the Antwerp approaches in a effort to seize the bridgehead he wanted.¹⁵

Montgomery's intent was much different. Fundamentally he came to the conclusion that Britain somehow had to gain victory in 1944. Montgomery saw a bold blow as the only chance of quick victory, and his decision to strike north ignored tactical opportunities.¹⁶ In short, the bridgehead on the Rhine represented the operational objective while the clearing of the approaches to Antwerp the tactical objective. Simply put, Montgomery outmaneuvered Eisenhower, especially when he was given permission to defer the clearing of Antwerp.

COALITION COMMAND

How can something like this happen? A partial answer lies in the nature of coalition command. Eisenhower in theory held absolute control of ground operations (he had just taken over

from Montgomery). In September he was not yet in firm control. His greatest weakness at the crucial time was his sense of justice, of being "fair" to Montgomery.¹⁷ At the same time he was attempting to placate Bradley and Patton. Cornelius Ryan points out Eisenhower's predicament:

As Supreme Commander, armed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff with sweeping powers, Eisenhower had one prime concern: to hold the Allies together and win the war swiftly. Although some of SHAEF's staff, including many Britishers, considered Montgomery insufferable and said so, Eisenhower never commented on him except in private to his chief of staff, Bedell Smith. But in fact, the Supreme Commander's exasperation with Montgomery went far deeper than anyone knew. Eisenhower felt that the Field Marshal was "psychopath ... such an egocentric" that every thing he had ever done "was perfect ... he never made a mistake in his life." Eisenhower was not going to let him make one now. "Robbing the American Peter who is fed from Cherbourg," he told Tedder, "will certainly not get the British Paul to Berlin." Nevertheless, Eisenhower was deeply disturbed at the widening rift between him and Britain's favorite general.¹⁸

It is hard to conceive that a man harboring such thoughts would actually give in to Montgomery. Yet, shortly thereafter, Eisenhower met with Montgomery and approved the Market Garden concept.

RISK ASSESSMENT OF MARKET GARDEN

Was Market Garden a risky operation? A simple question when asked some forty-five years later, for the answer is yes. Was the operation worth the risk? The answer today, again with the aid of hindsight, is obviously no. These questions, much less their answers, were not so obvious to Montgomery or Eisenhower. War makes such determinations difficult. In this case both men probably felt the operation involved little risk because

they viewed it as an extension of the August Pursuit. They spent little time analyzing the operation as a single event. It is clear that both these experienced and talented generals incorrectly assessed risk and as a result lost a battle.

WHY WAS MARKET GARDEN A RISK?

As outlined in Chapter II, risk is a dangerous action taken by a commander under conditions of uncertainty, which may result in a potential loss or gain to the command. There is no doubt that both generals created the situation. Uncertainty, however, did not play a major role in the decision to take the action. Both commanders, as you will recall, were more or less certain the Germans were still on the run even though Montgomery was warned of German troops around the drop zone. Consequently, the decision was not made under conditions of uncertainty. Although this part of the definition is not applicable, uncertainty viewed as a condition of war played a major role in the outcome of the battle. The weather in England proved to be a factor in the outcome of the battle, because it severely hampered the airborne operation.¹⁹ Uncertainty in terms of chance or luck (systematic risk) played a major role in the German dispositions and Allied reactions to those dispositions.²⁰

From a tactical standpoint the operation was not "by the book." The plan was permeated with flaws. To send XXX Corps down a sixty-mile-long, one-meter-wide, avenue of approach over

marshy ground is not a classical use of armored forces. The armored approach was too easily interdicted.²¹ Each bridge along the way had to be secured to allow the armored forces to pass through. To make matters worse, the last bridge was the objective of the least amount of airborne forces. Numerous other examples of deviations from the norm on the airborne side of the operation (e.g. drop zones, air flows) existed.²² Montgomery recognized these potential shortcomings, but in view of the perceived enemy situation accepted them as minor risks. Eisenhower knew little of the plan below the concept level. In terms of the tactics it appears that Montgomery understood the risks because he was aware of the details of the plan. Eisenhower was not.

POTENTIAL LOSS OR GAIN

Eisenhower felt the potential gains in this operation were essentially tactical. The operation was defensive in nature designed to provide security to Antwerp while providing a bridgehead across the Rhine to facilitate future operations. As such, the potential gain from the operational standpoint was the securing of a logistical base and positional advantage over the Germans which could be exploited at a later date. The potential loss was all or part of three airborne divisions and parts of XXX Corps, in short three or four divisions out of a total of fifty-six divisions.²³ Since Eisenhower thought the Germans were on the run, the Allies incapable of further large scale offensive

actions without first securing Antwerp, and the fact that the three airborne divisions were the only strategic mobile reserves, this operation was too great a risk for a tactical pay off. Eisenhower should have terminated the operation.

Montgomery, on the other hand, viewed the battle as operational in nature. His potential gain was the defeat of the German Army in 1944 against the same potential loss already discussed. This is a big pay off if viewed in these terms, and worth the risk if the operation was possible.

Eisenhower was also ultimately responsible for determining whether or not a successful Market Garden Operation would accomplish the operational mission. Eisenhower failed in this analysis because he did not recognize the importance of the following:

- Assets devoted to Market Garden would delay the clearing of the approaches into Antwerp.
- Delay in clearing Antwerp would result in a delay of future operations for lack of supplies, thereby prolonging the war.
- The Market Garden corridor did not lay along the best route into Germany. It was a sixty mile corridor going nowhere.

The cumulative effect of all these factors made the entire operation risky in terms of the operational mission.

The determination that a chosen course of action may not be successful is based on the analysis of the tactics involved in the operation -- a judgment in this area as to what is possible and what is not is required. In the Market Garden operation this

fell on Montgomery's shoulders and as we have seen he was lacking in judgment. The risk that a chosen course of action, even if successful, will fail to achieve the mission is the area where Eisenhower comes up short. Both analyses must occur in order to insure success. Fundamentally this is where the operation went badly wrong.

SOME LAST THOUGHTS

Montgomery may have had a problem with recognitional decision making. He had just raced across France in pursuit of the Germans. Prior to this occasion risk taking and boldness was not by any stretch of the imagination within his experience level. However, his most recent experience made him recognize the current situation as familiar. The action he took, therefore, was typical for the situation.

Eisenhower did not act with complete authority during this phase of the operation. In fact, his style of command was more democratic than autocratic. Similar dynamics occur in group think in which priority is given to preserving friendly relationships at the expense of achieving success in the group's tasks.²⁴ This group think mentality may naturally lead to decisions that are more risky, such as Market Garden.

Montgomery was probably out of his league. He was not a bold commander by nature. When the chips were down and things started to go badly wrong it was not within his character to be bold. He could identify risks, but when it came time to take

them he failed. Bradley sums it up best:

Had the pious teetotaling Montgomery wobbled into SHAEF with a hangover, I could not have been more astonished than I was by the daring adventure he proposed. For in contrast to the conservative tactics Montgomery ordinarily chose, the Arnhem attack was to be made over a 60-mile carpet of airborne troops. Although I never reconciled myself to the venture, I nevertheless freely concede that Monty's plan for Arnhem was one of the most imaginative of the war.²⁵

Unfortunately he may have lacked the right stuff to command such an operation. Montgomery's Army was also incapable of bold action as subsequent events proved. The reason was given by Clausewitz: "An army may be imbued with boldness for two reasons: it may come naturally to the people from which the troops are recruited, or it may be the result of a victorious war fought under bold leadership."²⁶

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CHAPTER V

THE INCHON LANDING

At dawn on 15 September 1950, the United States Army's X Corps began landing over the difficult and treacherous beaches at Inchon on the west coast of Korea. The landings were more than one-hundred and fifty miles north of the battlefront, and west of Seoul. Strategic surprise was complete, although a two-day preliminary bombardment had warned the few North Korean Peoples Army (NKPA) units in and about Seoul. The 1st Marine Division swept through slight opposition, securing Kimpo airport on 17 September. The 7th Infantry Division, following the Marines ashore, turned south, cutting the railroad and highway supplying the NKPA in the south, and surrounded Seoul.¹

On 16 September, Eighth Army launched the breakout offensive from the Pusan Perimeter. After four days of heavy fighting the NKPA began to withdraw to the north. Eighth Army began a pursuit which resulted in a linkup with X Corps on 27 September. On 29 September, Seoul was sufficiently safe to permit the restoration of the Korean government.²

The Inchon Operation was a remarkable achievement. It freed Eighth Army from the demoralizing and costly effects of positional warfare and instilled it with pride. It eliminated the NKPA as a viable entity in South Korea below the Han River and achieved a linkup with X Corps.³ Cost in terms of American casualties was high. Eighth Army and X Corps totals were 13,151

casualties was high. Eighth Army and X Corps totals were 13,151 casualties both dead and wounded.⁴ Inchon is an example of a successful high risk operation. It is a classic study of the benefits, both tactically and operationally, of bold risk taking.

BACKGROUND

On 25 June 1950 the NKPA attacked the Republic of South Korea (ROK) and within 72 hours NKPA soldiers were in Seoul. The remnants of the ROK Army were in a hard-pressed retreat to the south.⁵ On 27 June, General MacArthur dispatched Brigadier General Church to Korea to report on the situation. Church found Korea in utter chaos and the ROK Army in total rout.⁶ He reported his finding to MacArthur on 28 June and on the following day MacArthur flew to Korea for a eight hour inspection tour. MacArthur, after attending a briefing on the current situation, decided that he wanted to see the battlefield with his own eyes. When his motorcade neared the south bank of the Han River, MacArthur got out and climbed a hill for a better view. Beyond the river he could see dense smoke arising from Seoul, now occupied by the NKPA. While enemy mortar shells fell close, MacArthur later wrote, he reached two momentous conclusions: American ground forces must be committed immediately to save South Korea, and an amphibious envelopment at Inchon, or some such site on Korea's west coast, would ultimately be needed to defeat the NKPA.⁷ On the following day, President Truman authorized the use of United

States ground forces in Korea. MacArthur's own words demonstrate that even before U.S. ground forces were employed, he conceptualized a plan for an amphibious landing to the NKPA's rear. The landing was the central theme in his early campaign strategy to win the war. After all, MacArthur had mastered this type of operation during World War II.

THE INTENT OF THE OPERATION

McArthur's intent was to blunt the NKPA drive in the south at a point which would extend their lines of communications and make them vulnerable to an attack from the flank. Once the enemy became vulnerable, a force would land in their rear cutting the lines of communications and forcing the enemy to fight in two different directions at once -- the classical turning movement. The end result of the operation was to be the destruction of the NKPA and the restoration of the South Korean government in Seoul.

THE PLAN

MacArthur initially had four ill-equipped and poorly trained divisions at his disposal. The problem facing MacArthur from the beginning was how to employ this limited force to stabilize the fight on the peninsula and simultaneously make an amphibious landing. To get the balance right involved skillful risk taking, for to allocate too few forces for the peninsular battle would lead to the collapse and defeat of Eighth Army. In many respects

allocating the entire force to the peninsular battle was a low risk strategy; however, MacArthur felt in the end it would result in "frontal attacks which could only result in a protracted and expensive campaign."⁸ On the other hand, allocating too few forces for the landing would risk defeat in detail.

In July, MacArthur developed an amphibious plan codenamed Bluehearts. The attempted execution of this plan demonstrates MacArthur's dilemma. Bluehearts called for the 24th Infantry Division to go into battle first. It would land at Pusan about July 2 and proceed toward Suwon to block the NKPA drive down the western sector of the peninsula. The 25th Division would follow immediately and deploy in the center of the peninsula to backstop and inspire the ROK forces in the area. The 1st Cav Division would carry out the amphibious landing at Inchon on or about 20 July. Once the 1st Cav landed, the 24th Division would attack north, closing the pincers.⁹ The problem was when the 24th Division landed, the enemy drove them back along with the remnant of the ROK Army. MacArthur had to send in both the 25th and the 1st Cav Divisions to prevent his forces from being driven off the peninsula. The risk of an amphibious landing was too great, and the invasion was postponed.

On 23 July, MacArthur again ordered amphibious planning to resume with Inchon as the preferred landing site. Mid-September was the target date for the landing. In addition to the four divisions already under his control, the Joint Chiefs of Staff

allocated the 1st Marine and 2nd Infantry Divisions. MacArthur's plan called for a landing in the NKPA's rear by a two-division corps (later designated X Corps). After the beachhead was established, Eighth Army, with three division, would attack from the south. In August MacArthur unfortunately found it necessary for the second time to divert forces (2nd Infantry Division and the 5th Marine RCT) to Korea to stabilize the situation.

In September, after the commitment of the 5th RCT and 2nd Infantry Division to Korea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff began to question the concept of an amphibious assault. They pointed out to MacArthur that to make the assault in mid-September (date driven by Inchon tides), both the Marines and the 2nd Division would have to be taken away from Eighth Army. They were especially concerned over withdrawing so large a unit as the 2nd Division, reasoning that if Eighth Army needed another division during August, it would probably still need it in September. An alternate plan developed by MacArthur's staff was to pull out the 5th RCT and team it with the 7th Infantry Division. But any decision to use the 7th Division in September, they believed, would be "visionary and impracticable" since, though the unit was being built up, it would not reach full strength before 1 October.¹⁰ In fact, this is exactly what MacArthur did. He withdrew Marines (1st Marines) from combat along the Pusan Perimeter and employed it along with the 7th Division, a green, untried outfit with 8,600 ROK fillers, in one the the most difficult military

operations -- an amphibious landing.

WHY WAS INCHON A RISK?

The risks associated with an amphibious landing at Inchon were numerous. Strategic, operational, and tactical risks were taken. General J. Lawton Collins, the Army Chief of Staff, was briefed on the operations and gave his views of the risk associated with the landings. Collins gave both his view on the risks associated with whether or not a successful landing would in fact accomplish the mission and the risks associated with the actual landing. First, the risks associated with a successful landing:

- The withdrawal of the Marines (in order to make the landing) would so weaken the Pusan Perimeter that it would collapse and the Eighth Army would be routed.
- The Eighth Army would have to dash 180 miles to Inchon. Bridges were blown, troops were exhausted, and trucks were not available to effect resupply. The enemy was expected to put up stiff resistance along the way.
- If Eighth Army failed to make a speedy linkup, the Inchon forces could be dangerously exposed. Although Inchon was known to be lightly defended, the NKPA could quickly bring in troops from bases in North Korea, a mere hundred miles away. The weak and green Inchon forces (especially the 7th Division, composed of un-bloodied fillers and 8,600 ROKs) and the newly activated First Marines, might be cut off, routed or destroyed.¹¹

Collins, along with the Navy and the Marines, did not favor landing at Inchon. Inchon was considered the worst possible place to conduct an amphibious landing. The Navy's opposition to

the Inchon site centered largely on the difficult tidal conditions.¹² As one naval planner put it, "we drew up a list of every natural and geographic handicap -- and Inchon had them all."¹³ Collins' view of the risks associated with landing at Inchon were:

- Inaccessibility: Inchon was located on the south bank at the mouth of the Han River behind a thick nest of islands. Channels leading to the port were narrow, treacherous, and easily mined. The loss of one ship could block the channel.
- Tides: Deep draft vessels such as LSTs could get in and out only on extremely high tides, which occurred infrequently. Twice daily on 15 October, the date of the invasion.
- Wolmi: The small island of Wolmi dominated Inchon Harbor. It had to be assaulted before the main invasion. If the assault failed, the landing could not take place.
- Seawalls: Few beaches and the harbor consisted of piers and seawalls twelve to fifteen feet high.
- Urban Warfare: The city of Inchon had a population of 250,000 people. Troops were not prepared for this type of fighting.
- Weather: The proposed invasion date fell within the typhoon season. Systematic risk might come into play.¹⁴

Strategic risks were also associated with the landing. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned about the risk of failure at Inchon and asked MacArthur to reconsider. On September 7, the JCS made one final effort to bring MacArthur around to its point of view (to switch the landing site to Kunsan, an area further south) and remind him of the disastrous consequences that would ensue if Inchon miscarried or failed to produce a quick vic-

tory.¹⁵

While we concur in launching a counter-offensive in Korea as early as is feasible, we have noted with considerable concern the recent trend of events there (Pusan Perimeter battle). In light of all factors including apparent commitment of practically all reserves available to Eighth Army, we desire your estimate as to the feasibility and chance of success of projected operation if initiated on planned schedule. We are sure that you understand that all available trained Army units in the United States have been allocated to you except 82nd Abn Div and that minimum of four months would elapse before first of partially trained National Guard divisions could reach Korea in event that junction of main Eighth Army Forces with Tenth Corps bridgehead should not quickly be effected with forces now available to Far East Command.¹⁶

One other strategic risk associated with Inchon was the fact that Japan was left undefended. American ground forces were stripped from Japan and sent to Korea. Washington felt it possible, even plausible, that Moscow or Peking might react to Inchon with some type of action against Japan. If Moscow or Peking decided to take advantage of Japan's vulnerability, there was little the United States could have done with all of its forces committed to Korea.²⁰

MacArthur held his ground against all of these immense pressures. He was aware of the dangers involved with landing X Corps at Inchon, having received a "frankly pessimistic" briefing on 23 August on the tides, ingress, seawalls, etc.¹⁷ He felt that these obstacles could be overcome and if not, he could withdraw. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in his view, were merely losing their nerve. In his judgment the operation, on balance, was sound and required for a quick victory.

POTENTIAL LOSS OR GAIN

MacArthur was certain that a landing at Inchon would accomplish the mission. The potential gains of an Inchon landing far outweighed the potential losses. On 23 August he outlined his rationale for taking the risk.¹⁸ Keep in mind that in case the landing went badly wrong, he intended to withdraw.

- Inchon would succeed precisely because of the difficulties it presented. The problems were so obvious that the NKPA would not expect an attack in that area. He would achieve complete surprise. Surprise is key in high risk operations.
- Although Kusan, a port farther south, was more conducive to an amphibious landing, it was not tactically significant. Even if forces were landed successfully at Kusan, they would not accomplish the mission.
- A landing at Inchon would quickly sever and destroy the supply lines running in and around Seoul, causing the NKPA to withdraw.
- Seoul would be liberated, which would be a devastating psychological setback not only to the North Koreans, but to Communist regimes throughout the Far East and the world. Hence, Inchon could not be looked at purely from the standpoint of military feasibility. There was the "oriental mind" to consider.
- The only alternative to Inchon was a continuation of the costly battle in the Pusan Perimeter.
- From the strategic level, "Lose the war to communism in Asia" and "the fate of Europe will be gravely jeopardized. Win it and Europe will probably be saved from war and stay free."¹⁹

MacArthur felt certain at the end of August that the North Koreans had concentrated nearly all their combat resources against Eighth Army in the Pusan Perimeter. His view coincided with the official X Corps G-2 estimate. That estimate placed enemy strength in Inchon at 1,000 (later raised to 1,800-2,500),

at Kimpo Airfield 500, and in Seoul 5,000. Around 8,000 rear service soldiers against 70,000 United States troops were designated for Inchon.²¹ The forces ratios were in his favor. Finally, MacArthur's view of the risk associated with Inchon is best described by his remarks to an officer on his way to Washington in September to brief the plan.

If they say it is too big a gamble, tell them I said this is throwing a nickel in the pot after it has been opened for a dollar. The big gamble was Washington's decision to put American troops on the Asiatic mainland.²²

SOME LAST THOUGHTS

MacArthur has been quoted as saying that Inchon had only one chance in five-thousand of succeeding. Even though MacArthur overstates his case, he did display the type of risk taking and risk analysis required in our Army today. Inchon was a proactive, dangerous action taken by a commander which resulted in a large gain for the command. The decision to go ahead with the invasion was taken under conditions of uncertainty, uncertainty about the quality of the decision and, to a lesser extent, about enemy dispositions.

Some may question whether this action was a risk because it was "by the book." Amphibious operations under these conditions fell within the current doctrinal thought. Furthermore, it was natural and predictable that General MacArthur should think in terms of an amphibious landing in the rear of the enemy to win the Korean War. His campaigns in the Southwest Pacific in World

War II -- after Bataan -- all began as amphibious landings.²³ In terms of recognitional decision making, this may very well have been the case. One can not argue that choosing Inchon as the landing area involved both a tolerance for risk and a sense of boldness.

MacArthur also incurred risk in thinning out the Pusan Perimeter in order to garner sufficient strength to mount a landing. Generally this aspect of risk in the Inchon operation is overlooked. MacArthur had 192,000 men in his command; 70,000 were earmarked for Inchon and 122,000 were fighting in the Pusan Perimeter.²⁴ If he devoted all of his forces to Pusan, he could guarantee its survival and avoid criticism. He decided against overwhelming advice to the contrary to risk 70,000 men to achieve a quick victory. The harmony achieved in terms of economy of force by correctly deciding how much is enough in order to make an operational plan succeed is worthy of study.

General MacArthur was seventy years old during this operation. Age did not appear to hinder his boldness or ability to take risk. This contradicts both Wavell's and Clausewitz's assertions about risk, boldness, and age. World headlines hailed the man who had conceived and executed the operation in terms like "genius," "daring gambler," and "one of the great captains of history."²⁵ Even today Inchon is studied in terms of risk taking and operational art.

The key question is why was MacArthur sacked six months later? The answer is that the very thing that led to MacArthur's

success at Inchon also led to his downfall. He lost the proper balance. His unpredictability and boldness became predictable to both Washington and the enemy. Washington eventually came to view MacArthur as dysfunctional. General Eisenhower, in conversation with General Ridgway after the NKPA invasion but before commitment of U.S. forces, expressed the wish that, "he would like to see a younger general out there, rather than, as he expressed it, 'an untouchable' whose actions you can not predict."²⁶ If not before, most certainly after Inchon MacArthur became an untouchable and his unpredictability became predictable to the enemy. His military views concerning operations and strategy were afterwards seldom questioned. President Truman was more disposed to give MacArthur's views greater weight after Inchon than before. When MacArthur was insistent that North Korea be invaded and was personally convinced that neither Russia nor China would intervene in Korea, Truman gave him the green light.²⁷ The failure of the North Korean battles lies squarely on his shoulders. Excessive risk taking became the norm in Korea and lost its impact on the battlefield.

ENDNOTES

1. R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, p. 1243.
2. Clay Blair, The Forgotten War, p. 319.
3. Ibid., p. 318.
4. Ibid., p. 319.
5. Robert Heintz, Victory at High Tide, p. 4.

6. Blair, p. 75.
7. Ibid., p. 77.
8. Heinl, p. 25.
9. Blair, p. 88.
10. LTC James F. Schaubel, "The Inchon Landing," Army, April 1959, p. 55.
11. Blair, p. 224.
12. Roy E. Appleman, U.S. Army in the Korean War, South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, p. 493.
13. Blair, p. 225.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 263.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 231.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 232.
20. Ibid., p. 267.
21. Appleman, p. 500.
22. Brigadier General Lynn D. Smith, "Nickel After a Dollar," Army, September 1970, p. 25.
23. Appleman, p. 488.
24. Blair, p. 226.
25. Smith, p. 34.
26. Blair, p. 79.
27. Ibid., p. 327.

CHAPTER VI

RISK TAKING STRATEGIES

The aim of this chapter is to discuss various risk taking strategies and then to propose guidelines concerning their use. The guidelines are not meant to be all-encompassing. Risk strategies are situationally dependent and tend to become blurred based upon the aim of the operation. Even though the dynamics of each level of war are different, each risk strategy is applicable to the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. In fact, on one side in war several risk strategies may occur simultaneously in battles, campaigns, and even engagements.

Game theory is a useful tool to conceptualize different risk strategies for the purpose of analysis. In game theory there is a distinction between the following four possibilities.

| | | <u>RISK</u> | |
|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | HIGH (MAX) | LOW (MIN) |
| <u>GAINS</u> | HIGH (MAX) | 1 MAXIMAX | 2 MAXIMIN |
| | LOW (MIN) | 3 MINIMAX | 4 MINIMIN |

MAXIMUM STRATEGIES

In quadrant one a strategy that entails the potential for maximum gains with the risk of losing significant forces at the tactical, operational, or strategic levels of war is called maximax. Patton, MacArthur, and Rommel generally operated in this quadrant. MacArthur at Inchon certainly adopted a maximax strategy. Generally this type of strategy is feasible when one or more of the following conditions occur. Note, the terms army, wars, etc., are meant to be generic terms and apply to all sizes of forces and levels of conflict.

- One army's leadership is significantly more competent than the enemies'.
- One army is superior in quality and quantity. A significant loss will not by itself cause defeat.
- One army has the potential to quickly make up losses. This is relative to the enemies' potential.
- One army is superior, but a quick termination of the war is required for political or other reasons.
- One army is smaller than another and the only chance of survival is major victories. General Lee was forced into this strategy during the Civil War. Generally used when a prolonged action spells defeat.

MAXIMIN STRATEGIES

In quadrant two a risk strategy that calls for maximum gains with little risk is called maximin. This is the strategy of choice because very little risk is incurred with the potential of large gains. Unfortunately, it requires great skill, especially in cases where the opposing force is superior in quality or quan-

tity. This is the quadrant the United States Army strives to operate in. Generally this type of strategy is feasible under the following conditions.

- One army's leadership is significantly more competent and clever vis-à-vis the enemies'.
- One army has overwhelming superiority, does not need to take major risk and can afford to fight battles of attrition. This situation should be considered a luxury because the outcome is probably not in doubt. For example, the United States Army at the end of World War II; the Russian Army of the 1980s.
- A superior army which cannot afford politically to make a mistake.
- An army facing overwhelming superiority without the option of accepting or declining battle. Clever risk taking becomes a combat multiplier. For example, the U.S. Army's concept for war in Europe during the 1980s.

MINIMAX STRATEGIES

In quadrant three a strategy which entails minimum gains with the risk of losing significant forces is called minimax. This strategy is stupid and should never be adopted. Unfortunately, it is difficult to identify, seldom adopted by design, and usually the result of some mistake or miscalculation. Arnhem, as we have previously discussed from General Eisenhower's perspective, was a minimax risk strategy. From Montgomery's view it was maximin.

Miscalculation usually results in operations falling into this category. For instance, the Iran hostage rescue, in retrospect, was a minimax strategy. Its failure led to both a loss of American prestige in the region and a loss of confidence in the

competence of the American military. President Carter most likely did not adopt this strategy by design; he thought he was following a maximin strategy, risking a few American lives (both the hostages and the rescue force) against the potential of significant political gains both at home and abroad. President Carter failed to fully comprehend that what was placed at risk was American prestige rather than American lives.

MINIMIN STRATEGIES

Quadrant four, minimin, calls for a strategy of minimum gains and minimum risks. Generally conservative, cautious generals such as Montgomery adopt this strategy. Generally, because of the paradoxical nature of risk, this strategy overall increases rather than decreases risk. Actions become predictable. This strategy is useful under certain conditions:

- The enemy is superior and time is not a factor. The North Vietnamese Army tactics during the Vietnam War are a good example.
- One army is superior in size (quantity/quality); however, the enemies' leadership is superior. This is difficult to recognize, harder yet to accept, but nonetheless caution is required in this situation.
- The Army is not well trained or imbued with a sense of boldness.
- The object of the operation is economy of force. This occurs in multi-front wars where the object is to defeat the enemy in detail.

SOME LAST THOUGHTS ON RISK STRATEGIES

Determining risk strategies of armies, corps, and even divisions is more than an academic drill. Given the prevailing con-

ditions or expected conditions in which an army must fight, some risk strategies are more useful than others in order to bring focus to the battle. It is not necessary nor useful for an army to adopt only one strategy, for in fact to do so would be dysfunctional. Take, for instance, an army made up of two corps, one with an attack mission and one with an economy of force mission. Different risk strategies might be required for each corps commander. For example, one might be maximax and one might be minimin. In each case the commander must know how much risk he can or can not take. The senior commander has the responsibility to articulate his desires to subordinates in a manner in which they understand, so that when he states "minimum risk," the same definition of "minimum risk" pops up in the minds of his subordinates. This will only occur as the result of intensive study of risk in the school house and professional development classes given by senior commanders.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

One thing that is absolutely certain about risk is it is a dynamic concept. The paradoxical nature of risk does not allow commanders to avoid risk taking or disregard its effects. It is a fact of life on the battlefield...a condition of war. Leaders must come to grips with risk and use it to their advantage or the enemy will. Commanders must take risk, if for no other reason than to avoid predictability.

It is also clear from the two case studies that judgment is the critical skill required to manage risk. Judgment determines not only if an action is possible or not, but whether that action, if successful, will lead to the attainment of the ultimate objective. It should also be clear that everyone is willing to give advice to the commander concerning risk taking. The commander alone makes the decision based on the big picture. He is judged only by the results.

Identifying risk on the battlefield is probably the key to managing risk. The Army needs a definition that, at a minimum, includes uncertainty, hazards, proactive actions, and potential gains or losses. This would aid in developing the intellectual framework to begin risk assessment. In training we should allow risk taking based upon certain knowledge of doctrine in order to both develop risk takers and allow soldiers to learn from their mistakes. Risk taking for risk taking's sake (because it is

fashionable) should not be tolerated, for it will only lead to future disasters on the battlefield. This trait led MacArthur, who was a maximax commander, to be defeated in North Korea even though Inchon was a great success.

It is also clear that risk taking based on a clear understanding of the intent is the only way to manage risk from a commander's perspective. Developing risk strategies and explaining them to subordinates is critical. This was clearly the major fault with Market Garden. That lesson has a particular significance today based upon the Soviet style of warfare. The Soviet advantage of quickly turning a small tactical gain into an operational maneuver of strategic importance requires limits on risk taking. Without limits, misdirected proactive actions could lead to disaster. The dilemma facing the Army today is to teach senior leaders how to take risks while maintaining some degree of predictability in their actions.

The school house and commanders must get hot about teaching risk. It is a word always used but seldom discussed or understood. Commanders need to clearly state their meaning and tolerance for risk and risk taking on the battlefield. This will provide focus not only to subordinate commanders, but to the staffs. The school house must get on with defining risk and conducting case studies of successful and unsuccessful risk takers. Understanding the nature of risk, its relationship with boldness, and the importance the environment plays in developing risk takers is something no student should leave the school house without.

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